



Adsorption and oxidation of NH_3 over $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ surface

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ABSTRACT

$\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ has been reported to be active for selective catalytic reduction (SCR) of NO with NH_3 at around 200°C and resistant to SO_2 deactivation. To elucidate its SCR mechanism, adsorption and oxidation of NH_3 over $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ are studied in this paper using TG, MS and DRIFTS techniques. It is found that the adsorption and oxidation of NH_3 take place mainly at $\text{V}=\text{O}$ bond of V_2O_5 . A higher V_2O_5 loading results in more NH_3 adsorption on the catalyst. V_2O_5 contains both Brønsted and Lewis acid sites; NH_4^+ on Brønsted acid sites is less stable and easier to be oxidized than NH_3 on Lewis acid sites. Gaseous O_2 promotes interaction of NH_3 with AC and oxidation of NH_3 over $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$. NH_3 is oxidized into NH_2 and acylamide structures and then to isocyanate species, which is an intermediate for N_2 formation.

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1. Introduction

Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are major air pollutants. Selective catalytic reduction (SCR) of NO_x with NH_3 has been widely practiced in large scales to abate NO_x from flue gas [1,2], and the main catalysts have been those containing $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{TiO}_2$ as well as WO_3 or MoO_3 [3,4]. These catalysts are operated usually at temperatures higher than 350°C to avoid deactivation by SO_2 at lower temperatures [2,5]. This temperature requirement demands the SCR unit to be installed at the upstream of dust removal units, which makes it difficult to retrofit existing boiler systems. In addition, mechanical strength of the catalysts has to be high to endure dust erosion. For those reasons, development of low temperature SCR catalysts, which are resistant to SO_2 deactivation and can be used at the downstream of dust removal units, has been a subject of many researches [6].

Literature has reported many low temperature SCR catalysts especially those based on carbon materials, such as activated carbon (AC) [7], carbon fibers [8–10] and AC loaded with MnO_x , FeO_x , CuO or V_2O_5 [11–16]. Among these catalysts, AC supported V_2O_5 ($\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$) seems more promising due to its high SCR activity at 180 – 250°C and resistance to SO_2 deactivation [15–19]. More importantly, its SCR activity is even promoted by SO_2 at low

moisture conditions [20,21]. These behaviors were attributed to AC's high capabilities for NH_3 adsorption especially in the presence of adsorbed SO_2 [21,22] and to its catalytic activities for reactions of NO with NH_4HSO_4 , a poison formed in the presence of SO_2 [22]. To validate these suggestions and to further improve activity of $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$, the SCR mechanism should be studied in detail.

Many studies have been made to understand behaviors of the SCR reaction over $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ catalyst, including those employing temperature-programmed desorption (TPD) [19,23], transient response technique and diffuse reflectance infrared Fourier transform spectroscopy (DRIFTS) [24], and different mechanisms were proposed. Adsorption and activation (partial oxidation) of NH_3 were recognized as a key step in all the mechanisms even though detailed information on adsorption and activation of NH_3 was scarce, such as the roles of AC and V_2O_5 . While the information for AC and $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{TiO}_2$ catalysts is valuable for understanding $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$'s behavior in the SCR, such as formation of $\text{CO}^-(\text{NH}_4)^+$ on the AC surface [25] and strong adsorption of NH_3 on V_2O_5 [26,27], experimental evidence and theoretical analysis on $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ are still crucial. This paper carries out such a research using TG, MS and DRIFTS techniques.

2. Experimental

2.1. Preparation of $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$

A commercial activated coke (AC) with sizes of 30–60 meshes was impregnated using the incipient wetness method with an aqueous solution containing NH_4VO_3 and oxalic acid. The sample

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was then dried at 50 °C for 6 h and at 110 °C for 12 h, calcined in N₂ at 500 °C for 5 h, and preoxidized in air at 250 °C for 5 h. By adjusting NH₄VO₃ concentration in the solution, V₂O₅/AC catalysts containing 1, 2 and 5 wt% V₂O₅ were prepared and termed 1%V₂O₅/AC, 2%V₂O₅/AC and 5%V₂O₅/AC, respectively.

2.2. Characterization of the catalysts

TPD experiment was carried out in a fixed bed reactor of 10 mm in inner diameter. A catalyst sample of 0.150 g was loaded into the reactor, dried at 120 °C for 0.5 h and then cooled to 30 °C in a flow of Ar. The Ar flow was then replaced by a flow containing 1500 ppm NH₃/Ar at a rate of 100 ml/min for 1 h for NH₃ adsorption. This was then followed by an Ar purge for 0.5 h and TPD from 30 to 500 °C at a heating rate of 10 °C/min. The effluent was monitored on-line by a mass-quadrupole (MS) detector (OmniStar 200, Blazers).

NH₃ adsorption experiments were carried out in a thermogravimetric (TG) apparatus (TGA 92, Setaram) and a DRIFTS unit. A catalyst sample of 0.030 g was pretreated in the TG at 120 °C for 0.5 h to remove H₂O. After cooling down the sample to 30 °C, a flow of 1500 ppm NH₃/Ar at 100 ml/min was introduced into the TG for NH₃ adsorption for 1 h. The sample was then purged in Ar to a steady state (DTG = 0).

DRIFTS spectra were collected on a Bruker Equinox 55 FTIR instrument with KBr optics and a MCT detector. The diffuse reflectance cell has a controlled environment chamber (0030-102, Spectra-Tech) equipped with ZnSe windows. The spectra were obtained at a resolution of 8 cm⁻¹ with 200 scans and collected in Kubelka–Munk mode (a theory of reflectance) without any manipulation. The gaseous streams used in the experiments include 1500 ppm NH₃/Ar, 1500 ppm NO/Ar and 5% O₂/Ar at a total flow rate of 100 ml/min.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Adsorption of NH₃

3.1.1. The role of V₂O₅ in NH₃ adsorption over V₂O₅/AC

Fig. 1 shows TG curves of NH₃ adsorption on the AC and 1%V₂O₅/AC. To avoid possible NH₃ oxidation, the experiments were carried out at 30 °C. Clearly, V₂O₅ promotes NH₃ adsorption and provides the main adsorption sites, which agrees with that reported for other catalysts [28–32]. The amounts of NH₃ adsorbed at steady state are about 0.017 wt% for AC and 0.302 wt% for 1%V₂O₅/AC. The molar ratio of the adsorbed NH₃ to V₂O₅ is about 3:1, which

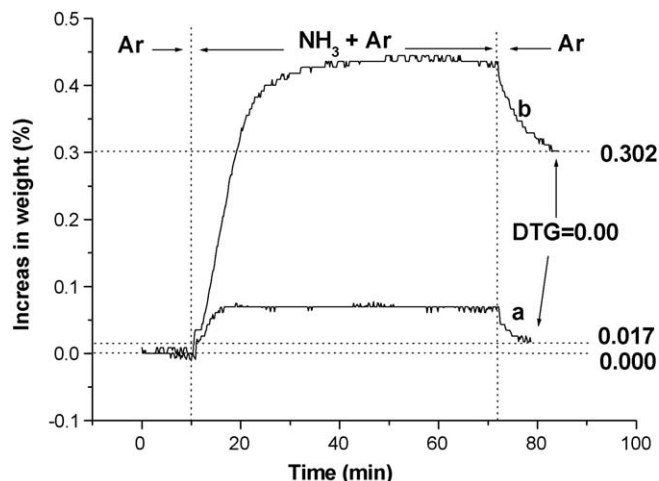


Fig. 1. TG curves of AC (a) and 1%V₂O₅/AC (b) during NH₃ adsorption at 30 °C.

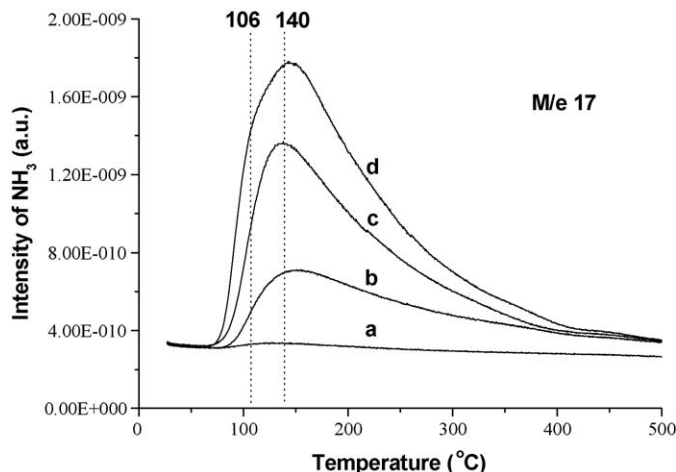


Fig. 2. TPD-MS (NH₃) curves of AC (a), 1%V₂O₅/AC (b), 2%V₂O₅/AC (c) and 5%V₂O₅/AC (d) after NH₃ adsorption at 30 °C.

suggests that NH₃ adsorption has a close relation with V=O bond since there are 4 V=O bonds and 2 V–O bonds in a V₂O₅ molecule.

Fig. 2 shows NH₃ release curves obtained from TPD of the NH₃ adsorbed AC and V₂O₅/AC catalysts. The amount of NH₃ released increases with an increase in V₂O₅ loading, further suggesting that V₂O₅ is the main component to adsorb NH₃. It is interesting to note that the MS curve of 5%V₂O₅/AC (d) shows a shoulder at about 106 °C before the main peak at 140 °C, indicating presence of two types of NH₃ adsorption sites at a high V₂O₅ loading.

3.1.2. NH₃ adsorption over V₂O₅

To better understand the role of V₂O₅ in NH₃ adsorption over V₂O₅/AC, NH₃ adsorption over pure V₂O₅ was studied. Fig. 3 shows a series of DRIFTS spectra of NH₃ adsorbed on a V₂O₅ sample (Analytical grade, Shanghai Kejin Fine Chemicals) at various temperatures. DRIFTS spectra of the V₂O₅ at the same temperatures before the NH₃ adsorption had been subtracted out to facilitate band identification. After exposing the V₂O₅ to NH₃ at 30 °C, several bands appear, including coordinated NH₃ on Lewis acid sites: 3330 (ν_{as}N–H), 3251 (ν_sN–H), 2969 (2δ_{as}H–N–H), 1625 (δ_{as}H–N–H) and 1254 cm⁻¹ (δνH–N–H), and NH₄⁺ on Brønsted acid sites: 3162 (ν_{as}N–H), 3048 (ν_sN–H), 2801 (2δ_{as}H–N–H), 1687 (δ_{as}H–N–H) and 1448 cm⁻¹ (δ_sH–N–H) [4,26,29,30]. Compared with the coordinated NH₃ bands the stronger NH₄⁺ bands suggest

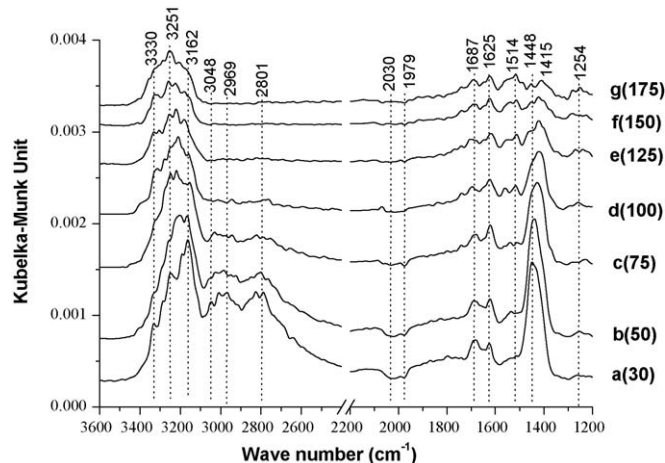


Fig. 3. In situ DRIFTS spectra of V₂O₅ adsorbed with NH₃ at 30 °C (a), 50 °C (b), 75 °C (c), 100 °C (d), 125 °C (e), 150 °C (f) and 175 °C (g).

dominance of NH_4^+ on the V_2O_5 surface. It is important to note that two negative bands at 2030 and 1979 cm^{-1} assigned to $\text{V}_5^+=\text{O}$ [29–32] are visible, indicating its consumption due to NH_3 adsorption.

Fig. 3 shows that both the NH_4^+ and the coordinated NH_3 bands become weaker at a higher temperature, but the decreases in NH_4^+ bands are more significant than that in coordinated NH_3 bands, suggesting that the coordinated NH_3 is thermally more stable than NH_4^+ . At 175 $^\circ\text{C}$, the strong NH_4^+ band at 1448 cm^{-1} shifts to 1415 cm^{-1} and becomes smaller than that of the coordinated NH_3 , and a band at 1514 cm^{-1} assigned to NH_2 appears. This indicates that the V_2O_5 has an ability to oxidize (or dehydrogenize) NH_3 into NH_2 , which had been considered to be an intermediate of the SCR [3,33–35]. The negative bands at 2030 and 1979 cm^{-1} gradually disappear at higher temperatures, indicating recovery of $\text{V}=\text{O}$ sites due to reduced NH_3 adsorption on the V_2O_5 surface.

3.1.3. Adsorption of NH_3 over V_2O_5 , AC and $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ at 200 $^\circ\text{C}$

Fig. 4 shows DRIFTS spectra of different samples exposed to NH_3 at 200 $^\circ\text{C}$ for 1 h and then purged with Ar. DRIFTS spectra of these samples before the NH_3 adsorption had been subtracted out for better band identification. The spectrum of V_2O_5 (Fig. 4a) shows NH_2 (1514 cm^{-1}), imide (1585 and 1342 cm^{-1}) [3,36], $\text{V}=\text{O}$ (2030 and 1979 cm^{-1} , negative) and NO (1864 cm^{-1} , weak) [37] besides NH (3000–3400 cm^{-1}) and NH_3 (1625 cm^{-1}), indicating oxidation of the adsorbed NH_3 over V_2O_5 at 200 $^\circ\text{C}$. Since there was no O_2 in the gas phase, the oxidation of NH_3 can only be attributed to consumption of $\text{V}=\text{O}$ on the V_2O_5 surface, suggesting $\text{V}=\text{O}$ being the main sites for NH_3 adsorption and oxidation.

The spectrum of NH_3 adsorbed on AC (Fig. 4b) also shows the presence of NH , NH_3 , and NH_2 . The shoulder band at 1559 cm^{-1} and the weak band at 1700 cm^{-1} indicate the presence of acylamide [33,38] due to interaction of NH_3 with the oxygen-containing functional groups on the AC surface. These indicate that, at 200 $^\circ\text{C}$, NH_3 can be adsorbed on the AC's Lewis acid sites and oxidized to form NH_2 and an acylamide structure.

Compared with AC (Fig. 4b), 1% $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ (Fig. 4c) shows increased NH (a stronger band at 3231 cm^{-1}), NH_3 (a new band at 2969 cm^{-1} and a stronger band at 1625 cm^{-1}), NH_2 (1514 cm^{-1}) and acylamide (1700 cm^{-1}), suggesting increased NH_3 adsorption and oxidation due to V_2O_5 .

Compared with AC and 1% $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$, 2% $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ (Fig. 4d) shows stronger and more complicated NH bands and increased NH_2 and acylamide bands, suggesting a higher oxidation activity. The increased bands of NH_3 on Lewis acid sites and NH_4^+ on Brønsted

acid sites may be attributed to oxidation of the AC surface by V_2O_5 or by the pre-oxidation step used in preparation of $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$, which promotes NH_3 adsorption and forms ammonium salts of carboxylic acids [33].

The DRIFTS spectra in Fig. 4 indicate that $\text{V}=\text{O}$ in $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ is mainly responsible for the high activities of NH_3 adsorption and oxidation, although direct information on $\text{V}=\text{O}$ is limited due possibly to the strong IR adsorption of AC that covers up the weak adsorption of $\text{V}=\text{O}$.

3.2. Oxidation of NH_3

3.2.1. Oxidation of NH_3 over V_2O_5 and AC

Fig. 5 shows DRIFTS spectra of V_2O_5 at various temperatures during TPD (A) and TPO (B) following NH_3 adsorption at 30 $^\circ\text{C}$. These spectra were obtained by subtracting the raw spectra by that of V_2O_5 itself under the same conditions. As discussed earlier, the NH_3 adsorption yields bands of coordinated NH_3 on Lewis acid sites, NH_4^+ on Brønsted acid sites, and negative peaks of $\text{V}=\text{O}$. The differences in changes in IR bands during the two heating processes are observable. In TPD an increase in temperature results in decreases in IR bands of NH_3 , NH_4^+ and $\text{V}=\text{O}$ (negative), suggesting depletion of surface N-containing species and recovery of $\text{V}=\text{O}$ structure. In TPO, however, these decreases are faster, as evidenced by the smaller bands of NH_3 (1621 cm^{-1}) and NH_4^+ (1435 cm^{-1}) at 125 $^\circ\text{C}$ and the fewer bands (3256 cm^{-1}) at 200 $^\circ\text{C}$ compared with that in TPD, indicating increased oxidation in the presence of O_2 .

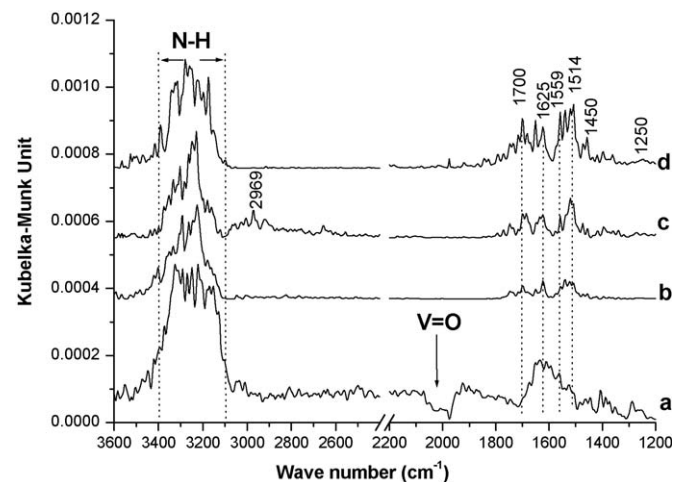
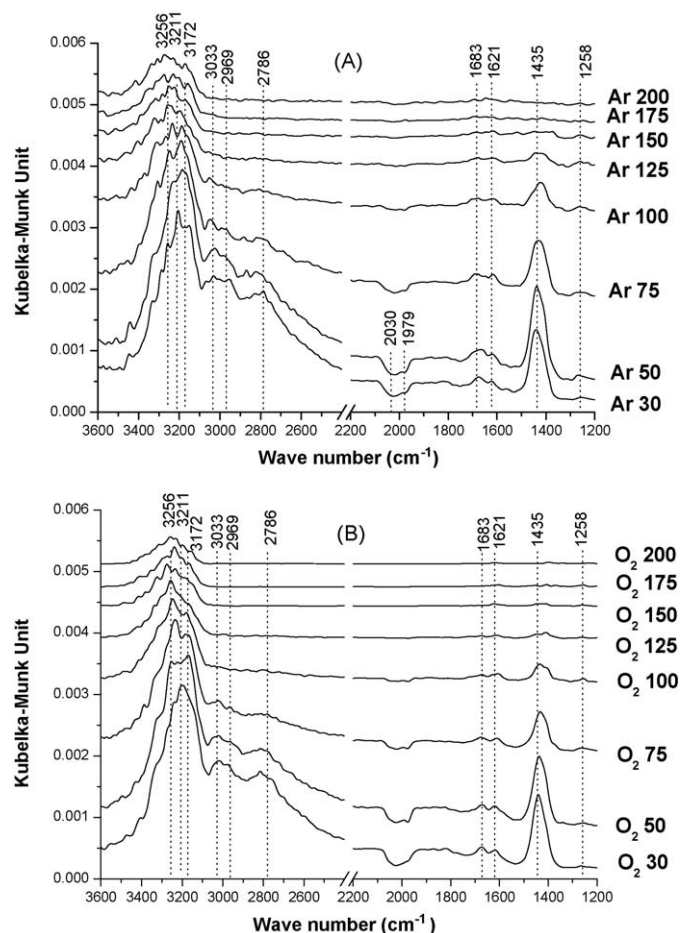


Fig. 4. In situ DRIFTS spectra of V_2O_5 (a), AC (b), 1% $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ (c) and 2% $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5/\text{AC}$ (d) adsorbed with NH_3 at 200 $^\circ\text{C}$.

Fig. 5. In situ DRIFTS spectra of V_2O_5 at various temperatures ($^\circ\text{C}$) during TPD in Ar (A) and TPO in 5% O_2/Ar (B) after NH_3 adsorption at 30 $^\circ\text{C}$ for 1 h.

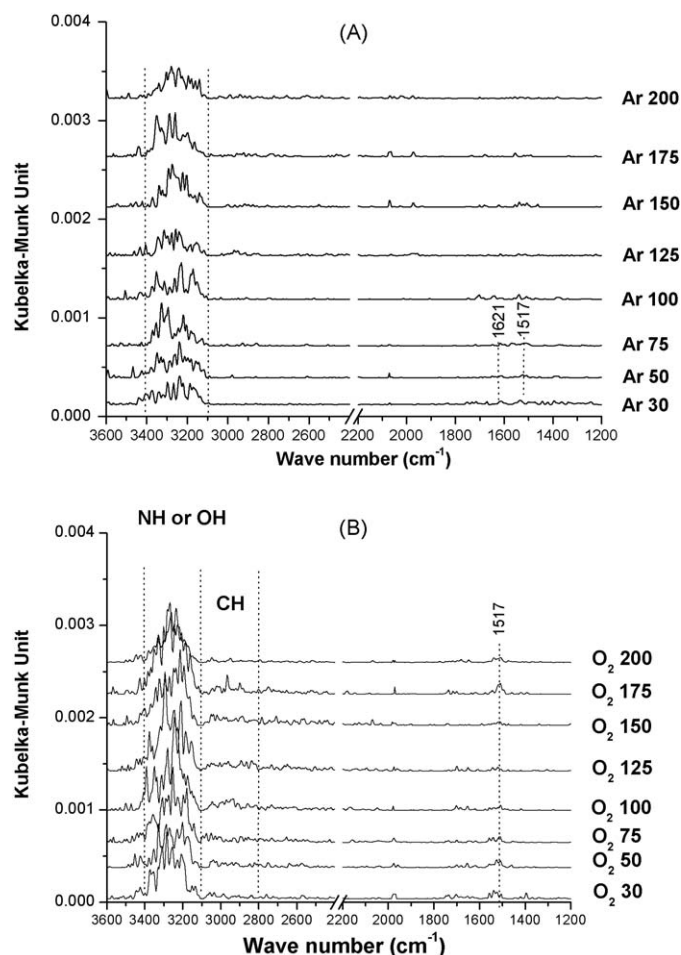


Fig. 6. In situ DRIFTS spectra of AC at various temperatures (°C) during TPD in Ar (A) and TPO in 5%O₂/Ar (B) after NH₃ adsorption at 30 °C for 1 h.

The relative changes in bands of coordinated NH₃ (3256 cm⁻¹) and NH₄⁺ (3172 cm⁻¹) with the increasing temperature are also different. In TPD, at 30 °C, the band of NH₄⁺ is much stronger than that of NH₃, indicating dominance of NH₄⁺ on the surface. With an increase in temperature the band of NH₃ becomes relatively stronger than that of NH₄⁺, as evidenced by their similar intensity at 100 °C and a higher intensity of NH₃ than that of NH₄⁺ at 200 °C. This trend occurs also in TPO, but at temperatures lower than that in TPD. Clearly, the NH₄⁺ on Brønsted acid sites is thermally less stable and easier to be oxidized than the coordinated NH₃ on Lewis acid sites.

Fig. 6 shows DRIFTS spectra of AC at various temperatures during TPD (A) and TPO (B) following NH₃ adsorption at 30 °C. Again, these spectra were obtained by subtracting the raw spectra by that of the AC itself under the same conditions. Fig. 6A shows weak NH₃ adsorption on the AC as indicated by the only obvious NH vibration bands at 3100–3400 cm⁻¹. The disappearance of the weak bands at 1621 and 1517 cm⁻¹ with increasing temperature indicates intricate structure of NH on the AC surface corresponding to changes in bands at 3100–3400 cm⁻¹.

Compared with Fig. 6A, Fig. 6B shows stronger NH bands, new CH bands (2800–3100 cm⁻¹) as well as a weak NH₂ band (near 1517 cm⁻¹) [3,37,39] indicating oxidation of NH₃ by O₂ on the AC surface.

3.2.2. Oxidation of NH₃ over V₂O₅/AC

Fig. 7 shows DRIFTS spectra of 2%V₂O₅/AC at various temperatures during TPD (A) and TPO (B) following NH₃

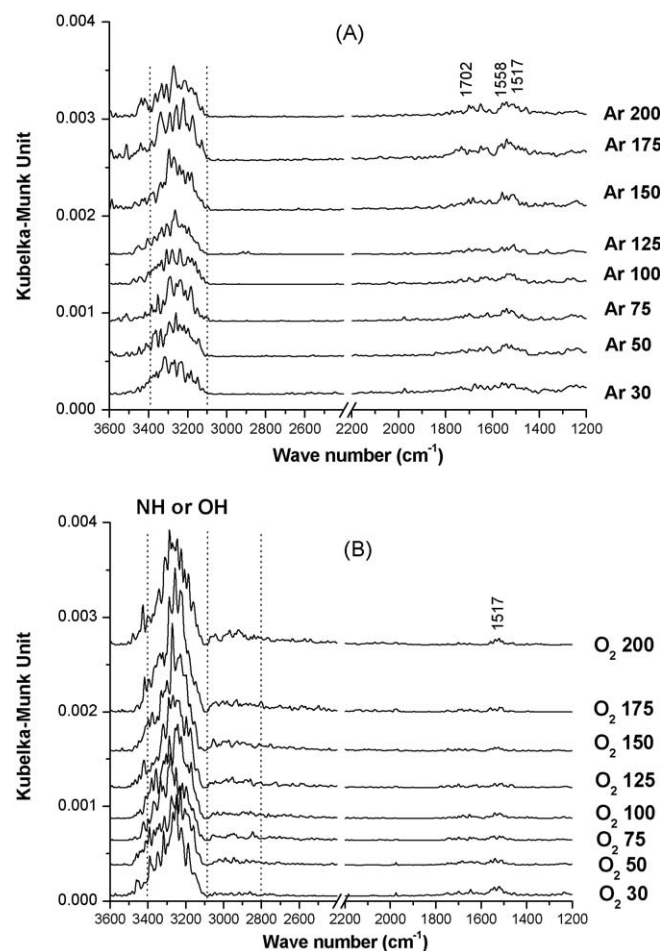


Fig. 7. In situ DRIFTS spectra of 2%V₂O₅/AC at various temperatures (°C) during TPD in Ar (A) and TPO in 5%O₂/Ar (B) after NH₃ adsorption at 30 °C for 1 h.

adsorption at 30 °C. The same as before, these spectra were obtained by subtracting the raw spectra by that of 2%V₂O₅/AC itself under the same conditions. Comparing with that of AC in Fig. 6A, Fig. 7A shows stronger NH₃ bands. The appearance of the bands at 1558 and 1702 cm⁻¹ and the increase in band at 1517 cm⁻¹ indicate oxidation (or dehydrogenation) of NH₃ into NH₂ and acylamide species by V₂O₅ in the absence of O₂.

Similar to Fig. 6, Fig. 7B shows stronger NH and CH bands than Fig. 7A, suggesting increased NH₃ adsorption by O₂. The smaller bands at 1702, 1558 and 1517 cm⁻¹ than those in Fig. 7A, especially at high temperatures, mean consumption of NH₂ and acylamide structures through reactions with O₂. The acylamide structures seem more active than NH₂ because their bands disappear at faster rates.

Acylamide structure and NH₂ had been proposed to be intermediates of the SCR. Their formation on V₂O₅/AC and disappearance in O₂ do not suggest a negative role of O₂ in activation of adsorbed NH₃, because the reduced active sites on V₂O₅/AC by NH₃ activation (partial oxidation) need to be restored by gaseous O₂.

To further understand the role of O₂, 2%V₂O₅/AC was pretreated in Ar or in 5%O₂/Ar at 200 °C for 0.5 h before NH₃ adsorption at 30 °C. The sample pretreated in Ar (Fig. 8A) shows bands of NH₃ on Lewis acid sites, NH₄⁺ on Brønsted acid sites, and amine (near 1560 and 1698 cm⁻¹) [30,36]. In comparison, the sample pretreated in 5%O₂/Ar (Fig. 8B) shows a higher NH₄⁺ band, suggesting reactions of NH₃ with carboxylic structure formed on the AC surface in the O₂ treatment, and a stronger NH₂ band at 1519 cm⁻¹, indicating

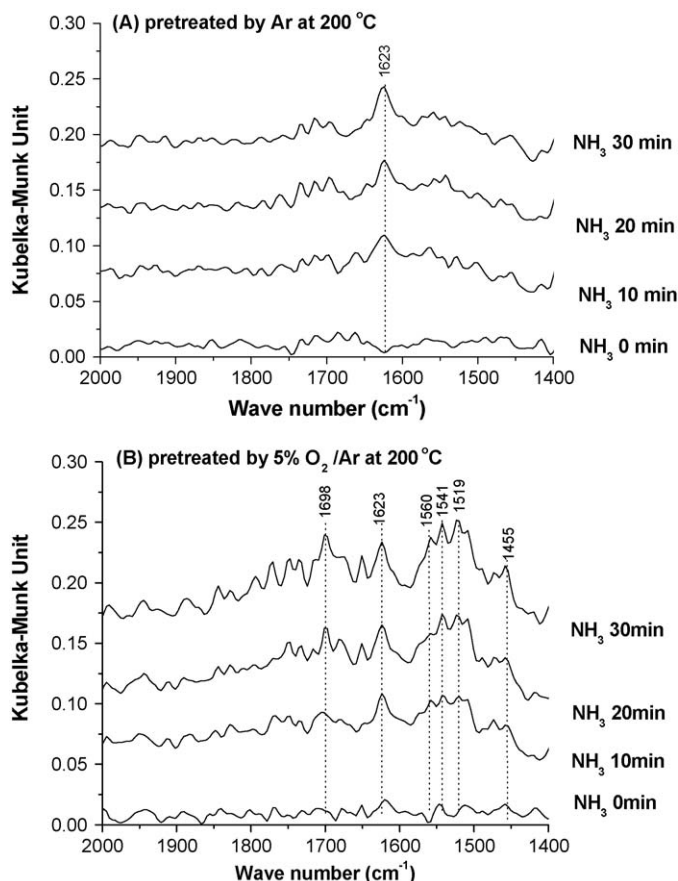


Fig. 8. In situ DRIFTS spectrum of V_2O_5/AC pretreated by Ar (A) or 5% O_2/Ar (B) at 200 °C and then adsorbed with NH_3 at 30 °C for 0 min (a), 10 min (b), 20 min (c) and 30 min (d).

partial oxidation (or dehydrogenation) of the adsorbed NH_3 . The two strong bands near 1698 and 1560–1541 cm^{-1} , assigned to interactions between NH_3 and $C=O$ and termed amide bands I and II in the literature [33,40], indicate formation of $C=O$ group in the O_2 treatment. Clearly, the O_2 treatment not only results in more NH_4^+ on Brønsted acid sites on the V_2O_5/AC surface but also a higher oxidation activity.

3.2.3. Oxidation of NH_3 by O_2

Due to progressive oxidation with increasing temperature, behavior of NH_3 oxidation at 200 °C is not clearly seen in Fig. 7B. Therefore, 2% V_2O_5/AC was subjected to co-adsorption of NH_3 and O_2 at 200 °C followed by Ar purging and exposure to a mixture of NO and O_2 . The DRIFTS spectra of the experiment are shown in Fig. 9. After the 30 min co-adsorption, the catalyst shows obvious bands at 2217 and 1083 cm^{-1} , indicating formation of isocyanate species (NCO) [33] and CN bond in a $C(NH_2)$ structure, respectively. These species seem quite stable since they change little during the Ar purging. It should be noted that the changes in NCO and $C(NH_x)$ may be interrelated, $C(NH_2)$ may be oxidized by O_2 to form NCO which is an intermediate for the formation of N_2 or NO.

Introduction of NO and O_2 reduces the $C(NH_2)$ band due to its participation in the SCR reaction and eliminates the NCO band due to oxidation with O_2 . The formation of new bands at 2194 and 2178 cm^{-1} may result from split of the band at 2180 cm^{-1} assigned to $N\equiv N$ vibration in N_2^- ions [3], indicating formation of N_2 through continued oxidation of $C-NH_2$ to NCO. Those mean that gaseous O_2 plays an important role in oxidation of NH_3 to N_2 .

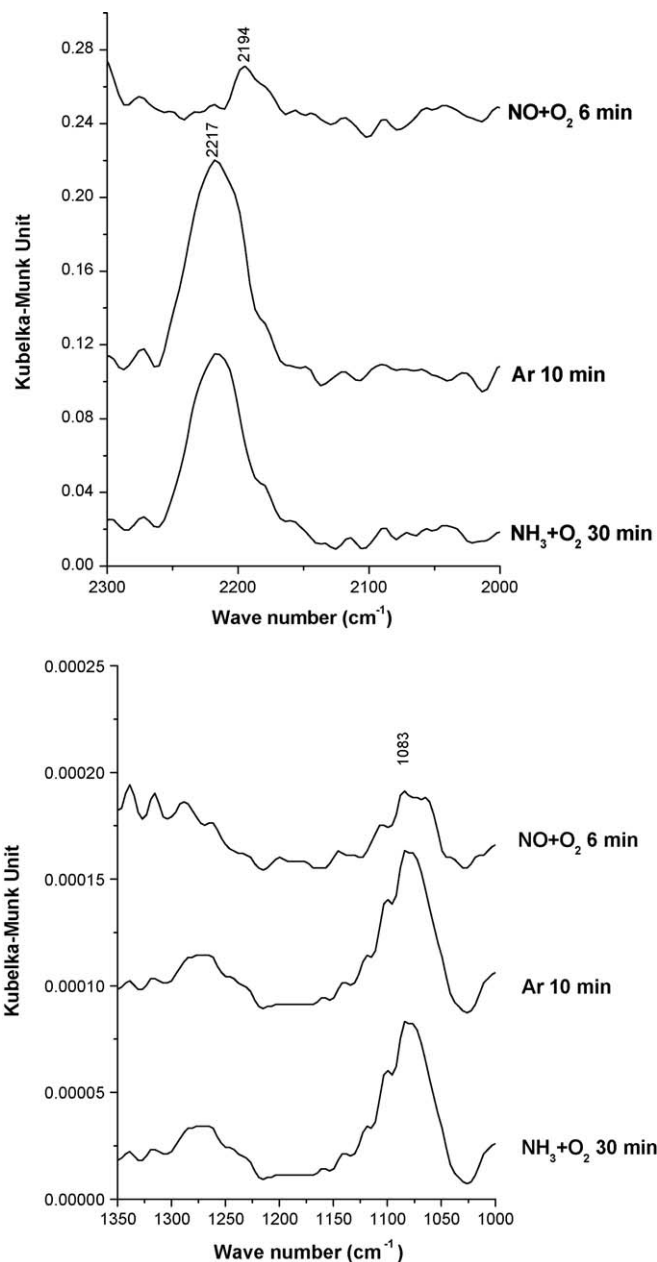


Fig. 9. In situ DRIFTS spectrum of 2% V_2O_5/AC subjected to NH_3 adsorption in the presence of O_2 at 200 °C and then exposure to a mixture of NO and O_2 .

4. Conclusions

V_2O_5/AC has higher abilities for NH_3 adsorption and oxidation than AC due mainly to the presence of V_2O_5 . V_2O_5 has Brønsted and Lewis acid sites. The NH_4^+ on Brønsted acid sites is thermally less stable and easier to be oxidized than the coordinated NH_3 on Lewis acid sites. $V=O$ bond is the main sites for the role of V_2O_5 . In addition to NH_4^+ on Brønsted acid sites and NH_3 on Lewis acid sites, NH_3 adsorption on V_2O_5/AC at 200 °C yields also NH_2 and acylamide, the latter is more active than the former in the presence of O_2 .

Gaseous O_2 promotes adsorption and oxidation of NH_3 over V_2O_5/AC to form more NH_4^+ , NH_2 and acylamide species. It also promotes the reaction of NH_3 with C to form a $C(NH_2)$ structure, which is active for SCR or is further oxidized into N_2 via an intermediate isocyanate species NCO.

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